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	WHA-00	DS-00	EAP-00	DHSE-00	EUR-00	FBIE-00	VCI-00
	FRB-00	H-00	TEDE-00	INR-00	MOFM-00	MOF-00	VCIE-00
	NEA-00	NSAE-00	NIMA-00	MCC-00	GIWI-00	SCT-00	DOHS-00
	FMPC-00	SSO-00	SS-00	TRSE-00	NCTC-00	ASDS-00	CBP-00
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SUBJECT: A REGIONAL APPROACH TOWARDS AQIM

Classified By: Classified by Samuel C. Laeuchli, Charge d,Affaires, for Reasons 1.4 (B&D)

1. (C/NF) The recent spate of hostage-taking, murder and military counter measures in the Sahel Region have brought to the forefront the need for concerted action against AQIM. Responding to these events, the countries of the region, particularly Mali, appear to be eager to take concrete actions against AQIM. Given that terrorist acts have occurred in Algeria, Mali, Mauritania and Niger and that other regional players have been involved to a greater or lesser extent in the issue, it is clear that any solution to the problem of AQIM must be a regional one. This has been underscored on multiple occasions by regional leaders themselves. The fact that AQIM terrorists move unhindered across the countries and borders of the region also argues for a regional approach.

2.(C/NF) Although Burkina Faso is a somewhat peripheral actor in these events, it has functioned in a mediating capacity in both conflict resolution and hostage issues. It would certainly play a secondary role in any regional solution, but nonetheless we would like to propose some thoughts on what a regional solution might look like and suggest some steps as to how we might get there.

3. (C/NF) The goal of any regional approach should be focused on changing the situation on the ground. This means that AQIM must be deprived of safe havens in any of the countries in the region through the application of military pressure based on political resolve. Also, AQIM should be deprived of sources of supplies, fuel, food and perhaps most importantly, funding. We also need to cut off AQIM from receiving support from local populations. To achieve these goals, two things need to happen. The militaries and governments in the region need to acquire the capacity and resources to carry out these operations and the countries need to cooperate with each other in order to be truly effective. At this point, neither of these two conditions is being met. The United States, working together with like

minded developed countries and the countries of the region, can help create them both.

¶4. (C/NF) Why not TSCTP/OEF-TS? This effort cannot be successful if undertaken by the United States alone. To begin with, if we act without international partners, the countries of the region will be highly suspicious of our motives and will refuse to cooperate or will work against us.

In addition, if other donors are left out, they may be suspicious of our motives and presence and advise regional countries to resist U.S. initiatives. It will be very difficult for the U.S. working alone to cajole the countries of the region to work together, and history bears out that so far this effort has not succeeded. We will need to leverage the resources and political capital other countries could bring to bear. Any effective coalition in the region should include the key countries of the region, beginning with Mali and Algeria but if things progress as desired, eventually bringing in Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritania, Niger, Burkina Faso and perhaps Libya, but should also include former colonial powers France and the UK plus more international actors such as Canada, and perhaps Japan and Germany. The UK and Canada are already preparing to increase their presence in the region.

¶5. (C/NF) Such a coalition, perhaps called "Friends of the Sahel" (FOS) could develop and implement a joint strategy to combat AQIM. Elements of the strategy could include strengthening the military capacity of the concerned countries, joint patrols and information sharing to monitor and control the borders between the countries, allowing hot pursuit across borders or planning joint operations against AQIM units. The strategy could also include broader, more efficient intelligence sharing, information exchange on terrorist financing and supply routes, cutting off supplies of resources such as vehicles, gas, and communications equipment, as well as working together on lessons learned and leadership data on key extremists. Other countries in the region, including Burkina Faso, could be involved in helping curbing weapons and drug trafficking, and could provide other political and logistical support to the effort. There should be regional cooperation on the military, police, gendarme and intelligence levels.

¶6. (C/NF) A related set of requirements would focus on development in the region. Local populations, even where limited in number, would have to see the benefits of turning their back on AQIM and integrating more fully into national and international economic and political structures. This requires greater effort to provide both infrastructure and services, including food security, health care and education, in the region. This effort should be integrated and coordinated with other donors to provide maximum effect.

¶7. (C/NF) The way ahead. Should the U.S. government agree to such a strategy, one way of moving ahead would be to get certain key G-8 allies on board with our approach. This should initially be done bilaterally in capitals and Washington to build a coalition around the idea. Then there should be initial meetings with these allies as a group, and after that bringing in the countries of the Sahel region. This initial group of G-8 partners could work with us to bring the regional actors on board. This process could culminate in a Foreign Ministers, level meeting where a text would be finalized outlining both a general approach and what concrete actions needed to be taken. Then of course it would take continued engagement and resources on the part of the U.S. and our partners to keep the efforts on track, but there would be a solid framework for further action, leading, if successful, to the incapacitation of AQIM in the region.